United Nations A/66/PV.24

# General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

*Official Records*

**24**th plenary meeting
Saturday, 24 September 2011, 6 p.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 6.10 p.m.*

**Agenda item 8** (*continued*)

**General debate**

**The Acting President**: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

**Mr. Asselborn** (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Luxembourg is very pleased that the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, was able for the first time to address this Assembly on behalf of the European Union (see A/66/PV.15), and I align myself fully with his statement.

Never before has the United Nations been so indispensable; never before have expectations of it been so great. We are going through a period of great turbulence; a period, as the Secretary-General has said, burdened by great difficulties, but also rich in opportunity for the progress of humankind. It is our duty to respond to the expectations placed on us by all those across the world who seek peace, security and dignity.

On 9 July 2011 a new State was born before the eyes of the entire world. In January, during their referendum on independence, the people of South Sudan spoke loudly and clearly. More than 98 per cent of the electorate voted for the independence to which the southern part of Africa's largest country had aspired for so long. Luxembourg is proud to have recognized South Sudan on 9 July, even before the historic moment of its admission to the United Nations.

The independence of South Sudan is a testament to the willingness of the two parties in the long Sudanese conflict to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. It is now up to both parties to show the same willingness to implement new agreements to address the issues of good-neighbourly relations between the Sudan and South Sudan. The two Sudans, and their peoples first of all, will benefit if the relationship finally becomes a constructive one, allowing for socio-economic development on a new basis.

The international community stands ready to support both countries. The development of the Sudan and support of the new State of South Sudan on its path to viability, stability and prosperity are tasks that we must all tackle together and cooperatively. The European Union is actively engaged. Luxembourg fully supports its efforts and is also committed bilaterally, particularly regarding demining activities to help remove the vestiges of a war that was so long that it has marked several generations of Sudanese.

A few days ago, in recognizing the full powers of Libya's National Transitional Council, the Assembly blessed, in a way, the end of Colonel Al-Qadhafi's dictatorial regime, one that suffocated the whole of Libyan society for 42 years and did not hesitate to use

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

11-51378 (E)

Please recycle

heavy weapons against its own population without discrimination, trampling on its people's aspirations for freedom.

The international community had to react, to assume its responsibility to protect Libyan men, women and children who were under fire — and who, unfortunately, are still under fire in Sirte and Bani Walid. We did not want to reproach ourselves yet again for having hesitated too long, for having neglected our responsibility to protect those unable to defend themselves against the cruelty of their own authorities. We did not want once again to be the powerless witnesses of large-scale violence.

Our Organization was able to react and demonstrate its capacity to act in a decisive, timely and just manner. The General Assembly suspended Libya from the Human Rights Council. Acting within the remit of Chapter VII of the Charter, the Security Council authorized all measures necessary to protect the population and civilian areas under threat of attack. The Council was able to act so decisively because the international community, and the region in particular, supported its action. The Arab League played a very important role in this regard, which I heartily commend.

Today, thanks to their courage and the resolute support of the international community, the Libyan people are free to choose their future. Together with our European Union partners, we stand ready to support Libya on its path to democracy and to help the National Transitional Council in its immense task of establishing a new State, in which human rights are respected and every element of society can find a place. As Mr. Jean Ping, who was President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, put it so well in Paris on 1 September, Africa will benefit enormously from the emergence of a democratic Libya, at peace with itself and with its neighbours. We will all benefit from it.

In Tunisia and in Egypt, the people have also prevailed in their quests for liberty and the rewriting of the social contract, in the face of the supporters of their former regimes. In other countries in the region, people must, alas, continue to struggle to achieve respect for their fundamental freedoms.

In Syria, the regime continues to conduct a brutal campaign against its own population. Every appeal, including that of the Secretary-General, to end the violence and repression has so far remained unanswered. As the Human Rights Council on 23 August decided, commendably, to send urgently an independent international commission of inquiry to Syria, the Security Council should also assume its responsibility in the matter. The credibility of the United Nations as a moral force, one that protects civilian populations and their rights, is at stake. Equally at stake is the capacity of the United Nations to be present in crises, revolts and disasters that assault peoples' dignity and threaten their very existence.

Peace, security, dignity — these are also key words when we talk about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the right of two peoples to live in peace, security and dignity.

A solution to this conflict, which has lasted too long and has poisoned the entire region, must necessarily be reached through the recognition of the right of both parties — not just one of them — to live in a sovereign and viable State. This is unfortunately not yet the case, despite the hope inspired by the courageous words of President Obama at this very rostrum last year (see A/65/PV.11). On the contrary, we have seen neither a halt to the illegal construction of settlements, nor a significant lifting of the embargo on the Gaza strip. The revival of direct peace talks was short-lived.

We all heard Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's vibrant appeal yesterday, his call for recognition of the his people's legitimate right to a State and for acceptance of the aspirations of Palestine to have a seat in the Assembly and to fully assume its place among the nations of the world. I can only hope that his appeal will be heard. Israel's legitimate desire to live for the long term in security depends on the realization of the right of the Palestinians to live in dignity in their sovereign State.

But merely responding to this appeal is not enough. It is imperative that negotiations between the two parties start again as soon as possible. Only negotiations will allow tackling the root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The parameters for a settlement have been known for a long time. I fully support the proposal made yesterday by the Quartet for a strict timetable: one month to agree on the agenda and modalities of the negotiations, and no more than a year to reach a comprehensive agreement.

I appeal to the parties to show proof of their political will and ability to make the necessary compromises and sacrifices so that by the end of 2012 peace in the Middle East finally becomes a reality. From this rostrum, I reiterate firmly that the restart of negotiations cannot again stumble over cement and stones, and I dare believe that the Israeli Government knows that. In their efforts both now and in the future, the parties can count on the nations of the European Union, including my country, Luxembourg.

The events over the past year in North Africa, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa remind us of the importance of a United Nations Organization with solid means for prevention and mediation, for peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Conflict prevention is one of the principal obligations set out in the Charter of the United Nations. Primary responsibility for that belongs to Member States, but no State can act alone. Each must be able to count on the support of the rest.

At the 2005 World Summit, we all committed to promoting a culture of prevention, and we put in place important new tools and mechanisms. The Peacebuilding Commission, by uniting all concerned actors and formulating integrated strategies, is an essential element of these.

My country is deeply convinced of the relevance of a broad and multidimensional approach to peacebuilding. Luxembourg is proud to be an active contributor to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, notably as Chair of the country-specific configuration for Guinea established this February. Our priority is to support the authorities in Conakry in the areas of national reconciliation, security sector reform and employment for women and young people. Since 2010 Luxembourg, in its national capacity, has been supporting mediation conducted by the Community of Sant'Egidio between the main political and civil society actors in Guinea.

Both at the bilateral level and in its capacity as a member of the European Union, Luxembourg sees conflict prevention and providing support in post-conflict situations as being at the heart of its activity abroad, primarily through multilateral instruments, with the United Nations, naturally, first and foremost among them. The challenges we face are not limited to political conflicts but also concern economic, social and environmental transformation.

Let us remember that the Arab Spring began with an act of social protest. We therefore agree entirely with the priority that the President intends to give during his mandate to sustainable development, poverty eradication and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

With our European Union partners, we will do everything in our power to contribute ensuring that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which will take place in Brazil less than a year from now, in June 2012, is truly successful. Rio+20 must set a range of ambitious goals that will ensure that we stay on track with sustainable development and preserve future generations' ability to live on our planet.

Sustainable development, in its three elements — economic, social and environmental — has long been at the centre of Luxembourg's development cooperation policy. I am happy to say that Luxembourg has managed to maintain and even increase its efforts in terms of official development assistance, which in 2010 reached 1.09 per cent of our gross national product.

We no longer need to prove the close link between security and development. For Luxembourg, the links between security and climate change are equally obvious. As the Secretary-General observed, climate change must be seen as a threat multiplier. Luxembourg's commitment to combating climate change, including through the Group of Friends created here in New York for that purpose, is also part of our strategy for preventing conflicts before climate change makes them worse. In that context, my country offers support and technical assistance to small island developing States, particularly those in the Pacific, whose existence is threatened by climate change.

Since the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, Luxembourg, together with its European partners, has made binding commitments to reduce its carbon emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. Luxembourg is also contributing to the fast start finance initiative in order to tackle climate change. I should stress that these resources are new and additional to our official development assistance.

Among the numerous other challenges that require a coordinated and collective response, I should like to mention one in particular: the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. Non-communicable

diseases not only cost 36 million human lives every year; they also result in significant losses to national revenue and pull millions of people below the poverty line. They affect all of us and are having an increasingly preponderant impact on developing countries. The response to this challenge of epidemic proportions must be global and universal.

I therefore commend the initiative on the part of the Caribbean Community countries to put this subject on the General Assembly's agenda and to publicize, beyond the medical community, the scope and impact of the crisis in non-communicable diseases, including in development terms. There is no question that the debate in the High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, the round tables and the various side events held in the last few days have allowed us to reach that goal. We should now fully implement the commitments undertaken in the Political Declaration (resolution 66/2, annex). I can assure the Assembly that Luxembourg will continue its efforts to that end at the national, regional and international levels.

*Mr. Allam-mi (Chad), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, whose tenth anniversary we have just commemorated, were attacks against not only the United States, the host country of our Organization, but against all of us, against our values and principles, our convictions and beliefs. Our Organization itself has become the target of cowardly attacks. Such despicable acts must not, however, lead us to turn inward. On the contrary, they should encourage us to redouble efforts to continue to act together in furthering the ideals and values of our Organization and its Charter, to fight together against terrorism and for a better and safer future for generations to come, for development and respect for human rights, for democracy and the rule of law. That is our joint responsibility: the responsibility to prevent, to preserve and to protect.

Luxembourg stands ready to shoulder its responsibilities and to continue to work for an effective multilateralism, including — if the Assembly affords us the opportunity — as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2013-2014.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Steven Vanackere, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Institutional Reform of the Kingdom of Belgium.

**Mr. Vanackere** (Belgium): Twelve months ago, I stood here and insisted upon the importance of the principle of accountability. This year there is even more reason to underscore this core value in national and international politics.

In several countries of the Arab world — in Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere — people are transforming the outlook of their societies, moving towards more accountable leadership.

On the African continent, in Côte d'Ivoire a leader who repeatedly plunged his country into violence did not stand the test of democratic legitimacy. With parliamentary elections scheduled to take place later this year, Côte d'Ivoire is now ready to make a fresh start.

And in Europe the arrest of Ratko Mladić confirms what leaders should know all too well: that war crimes will not remain unpunished for ever, that this world will not accept impunity.

The past year has shown that, more than ever, history is on the side of those who, worldwide, strive for more accountability. They will find Belgium on their side.

Accountability means first of all legal accountability: the obligation to implement international treaties and to respect international law. A former Nuremberg prosecutor, Benjamin Ferencz, stated, "There can be no peace without justice, no justice without law and no meaningful law without a Court to decide what is just and lawful under any given circumstance".

Some of the examples I have just mentioned illustrate that all too well. Ratko Mladić is on trial in The Hague. Mass atrocities committed in Côte d'Ivoire and Libya have been referred to the International Criminal Court.

From this place, I would like to launch a strong appeal to those Member States that have not yet done so to adhere to and shoulder the Rome Statute, as a contribution to a sustainable and accountable international legal system.

But accountability is of course much broader. It also implies political accountability. Governments,

politicians and civil servants are accountable and responsible to their citizens, be it through the ballot box or through constructive engagement with representative organizations.

Let me be frank: this is also a challenge in the continent I come from, Europe. We, as European leaders, should not run away from the obligation of being accountable to the people we represent. In the Durban spirit of non-discrimination, let me add: accountable to all the people, regardless of their ethnic background, their religion or belief, their gender, sexual orientation or social position.

Worldwide, the challenges are sometimes of a different order. Let us be clear. Leaders who believe that they can cling to power through terror and suppression make a cruel mistake. Leaders who believe that pointing guns at their own people, that sending death squads on to the streets, that stoning women to death is acceptable, have lost touch with humankind and are bound to lose all support, not only from their own people but also from the world.

Warlords who think that they can get away with sexual abuse of women and recruiting child soldiers should be stopped and held accountable by a united and firm international community.

Belgium will not stand idly by when people claim a future free of coercion and terror. Instead of non-interference, Belgium believes in non-indifference. Sovereignty cannot be a wall that leaders can use to violate the rights of their citizens. Sovereignty cannot be used as an excuse to run away from the responsibility to protect their people.

This is one of the main lessons that I draw from recent events in the Arab world: that democracy and accountability are of a universal nature; that they cannot be claimed, and should not be claimed, by any nation or group of nations.

(*spoke in French*)

Take the case of Libya, where the Security Council was able to prevent a massacre in Benghazi. Belgium decided, with almost unanimous support in Parliament, to take part in the military Operation Unified Protector, assuming the risk and the cost.

That was because Belgium is convinced that the international community has the responsibility to take action when populations are exposed to imminent danger. Molière said long ago that we are responsible not only for what we do, but for what we do not do.

Today, now that the immediate danger is fading, the international community has a responsibility to help in the reconstruction of Libya. Let us not forget that that responsibility is an integral part of the responsibility to protect. Belgium will contribute.

Let us look at the rest of the African continent, whose peoples want their voice to be heard through free and fair elections. In that context, I wish to make specific mention of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where, after years of violence, undeniable progress has been made.

The important part played by the United Nations, and in particular by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, cannot be ignored.

There are still significant challenges to be overcome. They include the continuation and strengthening of stabilization efforts in the east of country, the reform of the security sector, the establishment of the rule of law and countering impunity and sexual violence.

Those are essential ingredients in the consolidation of democracy. The 2006 elections put the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the road to democracy. The elections to be held at the end of November should confirm that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is ready once and for all to move on from its bloody past.

As an important partner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my Government is contributing financially to the preparations for the elections, and demands that every candidate and every citizen be able to participate peacefully and with full respect for democratic rules.

(*spoke in English*)

Let us finally look at the Middle East, a conflict region that has this week received much attention here in the Hall. Dag Hammarskjöld, to whom this week is dedicated and who himself devoted much of his effort to finding a lasting peace in that region, said more than half a century ago: "The building of a firm bridge ... over which you can pass without any difficulties may be a long story". More than 50 years later, we still do not have such a "firm bridge". That is not acceptable.

The parameters of a sustainable solution are well known. Both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples have legitimate aspirations. People want statehood. People want to live in peace and security. These were the messages that President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu brought us yesterday. It must be possible to satisfy both legitimate needs.

Over the past few months, the European Union and its High Representative have spared no effort to get a process of negotiations started. There is no alternative to negotiations, however difficult and risky the path may be. It is therefore my sincere hope that the steps proposed by the Quartet yesterday will be fully implemented.

It is also clear that the Palestinian Authority has successfully progressed on the road to statehood, also thanks to the important and sustained contributions by the European Union and by Belgium, and that it has now reached a level of statehood that the world cannot ignore.

Now is the time to show leadership. After all, that is what accountability towards the people of the region is all about.

Many have said it before: the global challenges we face are multiple. They range from terrorism to climate change and sustainable development — in which regard the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development will ask a lot of our energy and creativity in the months ahead; from financial turmoil to terrible humanitarian tragedies like the one in the Horn of Africa; from banning cluster munitions to curbing nuclear proliferation, notably in North Korea and Iran; from guaranteeing the responsible and transparent exploitation of natural resources through schemes such as the Kimberley Process; through to fully implementing the indicators of the landmark Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

For Belgium, the only way to address those challenges is through a multilateral approach. No country, however big or important, is capable of tackling global challenges alone. No country, however modest in size it may be, should think that it cannot be part of the solution.

Multilateralism is not about blocking solutions. It should lead to change, and should have at its centre the United Nations, which indeed has proved its added value in so many fields. Let me mention just one such field to which Belgium attaches particular importance: international conflict mediation.

When the Secretary-General addressed us earlier this week he mentioned Guinea, Kenya and Kyrgyzstan as United Nations mediation successes. The list is undoubtedly longer, but so are the needs. I am therefore grateful to the President of the General Assembly for choosing mediation as a central theme for our debate. I strongly believe that the United Nations should continue to invest in strengthening its mediation capacities.

I am proud to announce that Belgium has decided to financially support the United Nations Mediation Support Unit and to actively engage with the President and with other Governments and non-governmental stakeholders to strengthen the role of United Nations mediation efforts.

Some say that the United Nations is losing its power as a global platform for discussion and decision-making. Some say that global trends point towards a more fragmented structure of global governance. I do not think that that is true. I would certainly not think that it was desirable.

Belgium remains a staunch supporter of the United Nations. Our current engagement in the Peacebuilding Commission and our bid for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2019-2020 show our willingness to play our role in the United Nations.

Today I am also proud to introduce Belgium's candidacy for the Human Rights Council for the period 2015-2018, to add our voice to those who fight impunity and discrimination; to give a voice to those men, women and children who worldwide see their rights curtailed; to turn the principle of non-indifference into a living reality. That is not for the sake of ourselves, but for the sake of those to whom we are accountable.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sam Terrence Condor, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

**Mr. Condor** (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I wish, on behalf of the Government and people of Saint Kitts and Nevis, to express gratitude for the honour of addressing the General Assembly. I also extend on their behalf

sincere congratulations to Mr. Nassir Abdul-Aziz Al-Nasser on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. My delegation also wishes to thank Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, for his leadership during a very busy and demanding session.

Our new President's tenure coincides with a time when there is on the Assembly's agenda a confluence of global issues with particular relevance for the small island developing States of the Caribbean.

Most delegations recently participated, for example, in the United Nations High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS, held in June; the United Nations High-level Meeting on Youth, held in July; and the United Nations High-level Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases, held a few days ago. The convening of those meetings gives ample acknowledgement of the challenges that we still face in our relentless pursuit of a healthier world, and of the pivotal role of health and social cohesion as vehicles of national and global development.

The President has the awesome responsibility of piloting us through follow-up actions resulting from those weighty deliberations. My delegation is confident of his capacity and experience for the required leadership, and assures him of our fullest support.

The President has declared as his theme for the session "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means". Certainly, my delegation supports the pacific settlement of disputes, and we likewise acknowledge mediation as a preferred vehicle in preventing or settling conflicts.

In this endeavour, our small island Caribbean States would wish to be engaged in the support mechanisms in tangible ways, such as are already laid out in the provisions of such landmark resolutions as Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which addresses the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The people of my country and my region have great respect for the idealism that gave birth to this all-important Organization. Our ideals are indeed synonymous with those of the United Nations system, and our expectations are assuredly no less stately than those of large and powerful nations.

At a time such as this, the United Nations must show its unifying character by assuring that all Member States are equipped to play a role in the maintenance of international peace and security and in the building up of one another. We are our brother's keeper.

In today's global community, we must rely heavily on collective actions and solid partnerships, if we are to overcome the many common challenges that we face. Among those challenges are the misguided or ill-considered choices that are made by too many of our youth.

A critical and defining aspect of my country's future, and indeed a prospect that will largely define tomorrow's world, is our youth. It is therefore worthy of mention that youth violence has attained epidemic proportions in the Caribbean. We appreciate that youth violence is invariably symptomatic of deeper individual, community and societal issues, and that a multisectoral, integrated approach is required to redress the problem.

At the national and regional levels, States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are actively grappling with this challenge, and we are pleased to have participated in the discussions on this topic at the recent High-level Meeting. There is a need, however, to reinforce the fact that there is a role for United Nations agencies in supporting our efforts to reverse the bothersome trend of youth violence, with all its implications for many critical sectors, including security, health and development.

Accordingly, we shall be heightening our engagement with WHO, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF and other relevant United Nations and international development agencies in this endeavour.

The challenge of youth violence is also linked, to some extent, to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. While my country acknowledges the strides made in our region with respect to small arms and light weapons, through the recent adoption of the CARICOM Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons, there is still a long way to go. It is imperative, therefore, that we work together to bring a solution-focused approach to the problem of easy access to small arms and light weapons in our countries. CARICOM here calls for an arms trade treaty.

Related to this challenge is the issue of human security and development. My country is committed to

working diligently at the national and regional levels, and to collaborating internationally, to improve the lives of our people.

Saint Kitts and Nevis is a relatively small country, and it is usually the small and vulnerable that are most severely impacted when global shocks and crises occur. That is why, as a region, we promote collective action to enhance our resilience, promote human security, lessen our vulnerability and build stronger economies.

Such has been our widely acclaimed best-practice approach with regard to HIV/AIDS. Saint Kitts and Nevis applauds the General Assembly for convening the High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has collaborated with the Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV and AIDS, in keeping with its commitment to support countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals and also in ensuring that HIV prevention, care, treatment and support services are provided to all in need.

The agenda is still a full one and the challenge no less daunting than it was 10 years ago, in a region with the second highest global prevalence rate of HIV. We therefore anticipate and encourage the continued support of UNAIDS and other health and development agencies.

With regard to non-communicable diseases (NCDs), the Caribbean can be justly proud that the initiatives in the Port of Spain Declaration of 2007 — "Uniting to Stop the Epidemic of Chronic NCDs" — which arose out of the first-ever heads of Government summit on the subject, has resonated across the globe, resulting in the just concluded High-level Meeting with a consensus on launching an international wellness revolution.

Non-communicable diseases are to a large extent preventable. It is therefore essential that the outcome document from the High-level Meeting mirrors many of the chief concerns of the Port of Spain Declaration, aimed at encouraging Governments and the private sector to collaborate on increasing avenues for exercise, healthy diets and smoke-free zones for the benefit of the general public.

A long-term reduction in the enormous costs of treating heart failure, diabetes and hypertension, and the resulting 60 per cent to 70 per cent mortality rates from NCDs, is worth the investment in protecting human capital and the development of our various regions.

I am extremely proud that the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis has the lead responsibility for human resources, health and HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean Community, and continues to play a pioneering role.

We recognize the urgent need to make good on pledges resulting from the High-level Meeting, which can only augur well for a future in which due recognition must be given to the role of health in overall development.

It would be remiss of me not to highlight the significance of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Next June, during this sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, all eyes will be on the Rio deliberations aimed at achieving convergence on the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development. I fully support the main objective of the Conference, namely, securing political commitment. That is the critical factor for success throughout the Rio+20 processes and beyond.

Saint Kitts and Nevis is one of the small island developing States (SIDS) referred to in chapter 17 of Agenda 21. Throughout the past 20 years, the international community has made tremendous strides in addressing SIDS challenges to sustainable development. Regrettably, many an encouraging step forward has been offset by painful setbacks.

The effect of climate change is a bane that is felt on a daily basis in Saint Kitts and Nevis, as in other islands. The question is no longer "if" and "how", but rather "when" and "by how much" we will be affected. We need desperately to upgrade pre-emptive measures, to counter the imminent threat of climate change.

A defined strategy to aggressively promote climate financing is highly recommended. It will be vital if our countries are to successfully address the effects of climate change without tapping into already limited and depleted resources. My delegation encourages other Member States to join the call for the full implementation of climate financing.

In addition to pursuing outcomes that benefit all States, my delegation would like to highlight certain challenges that some members of the international

community face, with which the General Assembly can assist. I speak of Haiti, Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba and Taiwan.

We must ever remember Haiti, one of the most populous member States of CARICOM. We should remain acutely aware of Haiti's trials and struggles against natural and man-made catastrophic events, unsettling social and political vicissitudes and economic hardships. Their effects have set Haiti many years behind, compared to the rate of development of other nations in the region. We therefore encourage the fulfilling of the many goodwill pledges that have been made for assistance in its reconstruction efforts.

Another CARICOM member State, Antigua and Barbuda, continues to be locked in an underdog struggle to benefit from its success before the World Trade Organization Dispute Settlement Body. We again urge a speedy, fair and just resolution to this gaming dispute.

Also within the Caribbean, the people of our sister nation of Cuba continue to endure much hardship as the consequence of a 50-year commercial, economic and financial embargo. The Assembly and the international community have consistently called for the lifting of the embargo. Our country reiterates its call, and the call of regional neighbours and the international community, particularly the General Assembly, for a speedy redress of this matter.

Since 2009, Taiwan has been invited by the World Health Organization to attend the annual World Health Assembly (WHA) as an observer. This practice and the related arrangements have established what has been termed the WHA model, which sets a useful precedent for Taiwan's greater participation in the United Nations system. It is the view of my country that in today's highly integrated and interconnected world almost all issues demand full participation by, and cooperation among, international partners. As one of the world's leading economic and technological powerhouses, Taiwan can contribute substantially to the international community.

We therefore urge the United Nations to find a suitable way to allow for Taiwan's meaningful participation in its specialized agencies and mechanisms, including the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

I have presented some of the challenges that we encounter as a country and region, challenges to which the Assembly has itself given prominence. I have also given consideration to some of our aspirations for the sixty-sixth session and beyond. They are issues that demand collective inputs and interventions.

We are all part of the global community, and problems that permeate our tightly woven fabric invariably spread to affect us all in some way or another. It is incumbent upon us all, therefore, to ensure that the results of our collective enterprise and diligence allow for the realization of our desired goals. Surely, working together with purpose and integrity will ensure that we rise on the same tide. Let us rise together.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Franco Frattini, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Italy.

**Mr. Frattini** (Italy): Italy has a long tradition of mediation that has shaped our history and our approach to international affairs. In the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Italian unification this year, we commemorated the vision of the founding fathers of our nation and the sacrifices of so many patriots. We also recalled the role of mediation in bridging the gap between the aspirations for independence and the reality of foreign occupation.

A century or so after unification, our vocation for mediation was fulfilled when we were among the first countries to launch the process of European pacification. We helped restore peace and prosperity to a war-torn continent by engaging Governments in dialogue rather than disputes.

Our attitude to mediation is inspired by both our history and our geography. Our territory is located right at the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, making us keenly aware that our security is not independent of that of the region surrounding us.

For decades, Italy has emphasized the need to bridge the economic and social gap between the conditions of the northern shores of the Mediterranean and the expectations of our neighbours to the south. Despite this vision, we tended to overlook the aspirations for civil and political rights of the peoples of North Africa and the Middle East, peoples so close to us geographically but far apart in terms of the rights enjoyed by our citizens.

On the face of it, the approach favoured by European and the other Western countries — including the United States — was to forge partnerships with undemocratic regimes and place a priority on security, counter-terrorism cooperation and migration policy. We made a mistake.

The Arab Spring was a wake-up call, reminding us that no political leader can maintain power at the expense of his or her own people. It confirmed the principle that there can be no mediation or compromise where fundamental rights are concerned. And it showed that cooperation for the sake of security and stability is no alternative to promoting freedom, economic and democratic growth and job creation.

Our response to the uprisings was consistent with our values. We called for dialogue and deplored the use of force against civilians. That was not enough in Libya, however, where the regime had vowed to slaughter its own civilians. The only way to prevent a massacre was for the international community to invoke the principle of the responsibility to protect.

By helping to implement that decision in military, diplomatic and humanitarian terms, we shifted from a culture of sovereign impunity to one of responsible sovereignty, rooted in national and international accountability for the most serious violations of human rights. At the same time, we supported international sanctions against the Syrian leadership.

The uprisings in North Africa and in the Middle East send a message that the United Nations can do more and do better. Let me be very clear. We do not want less United Nations involvement; we want more. Libya can be the first test case for a more prominent United Nations role.

The United Nations is called upon to coordinate and lead the international community's assistance to that country. The international community should maintain cohesion and unity of purpose, avoid a fragmented response and resist engaging in a first-past-the-post logic. There should be no competition, because there is only one winner: the Libyan people.

The United Nations should therefore chair the international coordination mechanisms, with the support of the relevant regional organizations, such as the League of Arab States, the African Union and the European Union (EU). At this juncture we need to prevent resentment and extremism from gaining ground.

We are ready to build respectful new partnerships without imposing pre-packaged models. That is why we have promoted the idea of a new Mediterranean plan for growth and development. And we have proposed a permanent conference on security and cooperation, with the goal of building an inclusive dialogue among equals on political, economic and cultural issues. If we fail to respond, and if the Arab Spring does not produce results soon, we will all have a heavy price to pay.

Never has mediation been more necessary in the tense stand-off between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Confrontation has led nowhere. The time has come to defuse this long-standing and disruptive conflict through recourse to dialogue and the building of mutual trust. We continue to strongly back American efforts, and we welcome the Quartet's new effort to gather the necessary support to restart the negotiations between the parties towards the creation, very soon, of a strong and safe Palestinian State.

Within the European Union, which has to speak with one voice, Italy is also ready to exercise more leadership and political vision in relaunching the peace process.

In Lebanon, Italy is playing a prominent role in mediation. The Italian contingent in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon was awarded the United Nations peace medal for its contribution to maintaining peace and stability in the country. This prize honours the achievements of our soldiers in Lebanon, but also the commitment of the Italian Government to peacekeeping.

Italy is the sixth top contributor to the United Nations peacekeeping operations budget and, since 2006, the top EU and Western European and Others Group contributor of troops to the United Nations.

In Africa far too many people are still grappling with the serious problems caused by regional conflicts. Those conflicts undermine stability and prosperity for millions of people, spreading the poisonous seed of terrorism and piracy.

As a witness to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between North and South Sudan, Italy welcomed the Agreement's implementation, which has led to the birth of the new State of South

Sudan. This achievement should be an incentive to settle the post-CPA arrangements without further delay.

In the Horn of Africa, Italy has a traditional commitment to contributing to peace, security and development. In the past few months, we have financed projects in many sectors: health, education, nutrition, training, governance support, peace and security. But our assistance is not enough. In Somalia people are facing starvation and humanitarian disaster. International support must be stepped up to deliver basic services to the population and foster political reconciliation.

The United Nations collective security system is adapting its structure and practices to the new challenges by making good and flexible use of its fundamental, cost-effective tools. Mediation is one of them. We are among the sponsors of the draft resolution on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes.

We also encourage the United Nations to play a more significant role in conflict prevention, the settlement of disputes and peacebuilding efforts. To that end, we rely on the impartiality and authority of the Secretary-General. We commend him for his leadership in crisis management, and encourage him in this noble endeavour and in his commitment to budgetary discipline.

We also commend all the efforts to promote a strong solution to the reform of the Security Council, a reform inspired by the United Nations core principles of democracy, accountability, consensus and flexibility — a reform that will gather the widest majority and with which each and every Member State can identify.

Our humanistic heritage defines the human being as the measure of all things. The principle of placing people first underpins our active support for United Nations campaigns on fundamental issues such as the abolition of the death penalty, the protection of the freedom of religion or belief and the ending of the practice of female genital mutilation. The people-first approach also entails mediation between the pressing need for modernization and the goal of improving individual quality of life.

We need to enhance food security by tackling the crucial links between speculation, inflation of food prices, and instability. We can count on the new bodies created in the framework of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Rome-based United Nations agencies to reduce food price volatility and its very negative impact on the most vulnerable people.

We also pay close attention to urban development and environmental sustainability, promoting important international events such as the World Urban Forum, which will be held next year in Italy, and a world conference on the topic of the inter-ethnic city.

In conclusion, Italy wants to place the rights of human beings, and the environment in which we live, at the centre of society. True to this principle, Italy wants to help create and consolidate a modern humanism. There could be no better defence against the hatred and criminal intolerance that struck this city, this country and the world 10 years ago.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Trinidad Jiménez, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain.

**Ms. Jiménez** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I begin by congratulating the President on his election to preside over this principal organ in which we all strive to achieve the purposes of the United Nations.

I also wish the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the greatest possible success in carrying out his mission of promoting peace and progress around the world with the same effectiveness as he demonstrated throughout his first mandate.

I also warmly congratulate the representatives of the new State of South Sudan, which has joined the United Nations family during the current session.

The economic and financial crisis continues to be a cause of serious concern for the entire world; its consequences are seen in many different fields. The capacity of the international community to take action to address any type of crisis, and to do so in a timely manner, is limited. This restrains the fight against poverty and puts at risk the implementation of sustainable development policies, which are needed now more than ever.

Spain, together with its European Union partners, is taking difficult decisions in order to tackle the crisis. However, beyond the actions taken at the regional and national levels, it is essential to undertake a

coordinated global response. The United Nations system is an important part of the solution to the crisis.

Women's equality is a fundamental human right, based upon the concept of equality among all human beings. Advancing women's full and equal access to the labour market, as well as to the political and social world, is not only ethically imperative, but an essential measure to overcome the crisis.

Since 1 January, the United Nations has been able to count on an instrument to assist Member States to achieve that goal: UN-Women. Its Executive Director, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, will boost this effort. I assure her of Spain's full support. We will be at the side of all women who fight for freedom and equality.

Over the past few months we have witnessed episodes of rebellion in which peoples have fought against the tyranny of rulers who denied basic human rights, as well as the dignity and value of human beings, preventing people from participating in their countries' political life and from making use of their resources and opportunities.

We celebrate the success of the popular movements in Tunisia and Egypt and we join the efforts of the international community to support and strengthen the political transition processes in both countries, led by their own peoples.

The Libyan people will also be able to enjoy freedom and live in democracy after decades of dictatorship and months of conflict. We have welcomed the Libyan representatives in the General Assembly, with the satisfaction of knowing that the United Nations, by implementing its principles, has remained at the side of the Libyan people.

We now have the obligation to continue to help the Libyan people in the reconciliation and reconstruction processes. We are ready to do so, and we will do it under the guidance of the United Nations, following the pace set by the Libyans themselves.

Unfortunately, the international community continues to witness with indignation the brutal repression of civilian demonstrators by the Syrian authorities. I firmly condemn those actions once again, and reiterate the need for the international community to take measures to stop the repression.

The Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan revolutions, the Syrian uprising and the acceleration of the reform processes in Morocco and Jordan are part of a profound transformation of the Arab world, with significant consequences for the region and for the international community as a whole. The legitimate aspiration of the Palestinian people to enjoy freedom cannot be left out of this wave of change.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has been with the United Nations almost since the Organization's founding. This session may be remembered as the one in which the General Assembly granted Palestine the status of observer State. Spain could support such a decision, for a number of reasons.

First, the international community recognizes that a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict requires the existence of two States, Israeli and Palestinian, living side by side in peace and security.

Secondly, after more than 60 years of conflict, the international community should send a clear signal to the Palestinians underlining that its commitment in favour of the creation of the Palestinian State is deep and unambiguous.

Thirdly, in the year in which the Arab Spring changed realities in the Arab world — and, indeed, in the world at large — the just, legitimate and long-standing aspiration of the Palestinians to live in dignity in their own State, free from occupation and its accompanying suffering, deserves a clear response from the international community, a response that can no longer be postponed.

This new step could be conceived as a stage towards the legitimate objective of Palestine's becoming a Member State of the United Nations with full rights.

Effective, sustainable peace can only be achieved through negotiations between the parties. Spain believes that the Palestinians could find in this new status a stimulus for the prompt resumption of negotiations. Precisely because that is the shared goal of the parties and the international community, such a situation should not be used for actions incompatible with the spirit of negotiations. Israel should also contribute to this spirit by refraining from measures that prejudge the final status.

Spain is coordinating its position with its European Union partners. I am grateful for the efforts of the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, to reactivate the negotiations, in a way acceptable to all

European Union member States, and the declaration of the Quartet, which Spain assesses very positively.

Spain's engagement with the Palestinian people and their struggle against occupation is long-standing and known to everyone. Spain has always given political, economic and moral support to the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians.

On the other hand, the historical relations between Spain and the Jewish people date back many centuries. Spain's historical identity cannot be understood without its Arab and Jewish heritage.

I wish to underscore Spain's commitment to Israel with regard to the endeavour to create a homeland for the Jewish people. Since its founding, Israel has experienced a number of wars and has suffered from terrorism against its civilian population. For Spain, the security of this young State born out of an ancient people is essential.

The best way to preserve that State is through a peace treaty that, among other things, provides for the establishment of a Palestinian State along the 1967 lines, with agreed swaps and with Jerusalem as a shared capital. The security of Israel and Palestine will require effective guarantees in the future peace agreement, including possible international participation, should the parties request it.

The future peace agreement should look to the future, turning its back on the painful years of conflict. Therefore, Israel and Palestine have to be certain that claims originating from the conflict will be overcome with their signature of the peace agreement.

In addition, the solution to the painful tragedy of the Palestinian refugees must be a just one agreed by all the parties concerned, while allowing the preservation of Israel's current character. The Palestinian State will be, in this regard as well, a key element for the final resolution of the conflict.

Some voices have raised concerns that the new democracies may be home to political groups with radical or extremist ideologies. Democracy is an open and fair system of political participation that must also be able to defend itself against possible threats.

Fortunately, we can count on instruments that may contribute to preventing such situations. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which promotes intercultural dialogue and cooperation, is a clear example. The Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean, developed within the Alliance framework, may help, through youth programmes and campaigns to raise awareness, to diffuse democratic values and respect for human rights, always in coexistence with those of local cultures.

We have to prevent Al-Qaida's terrorism from being reinforced in the Sahel region through the release of uncontrolled weapons. The international community must be united in the fight against this curse that represents a scourge to countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, in the same irrational and cruel way as that in which it struck New York, Bali, Madrid, London, Mumbai, Moscow and many other places over the past decade.

The United Nations itself recently suffered the consequences of a terrible terrorist attack in Abuja, adding to those previously endured in Baghdad and Algiers, among others. Once again, I extend our condolences to the Secretary-General, and express our solidarity with the victims and their families, as well as with the hard-working members of staff of the United Nations.

The tenth anniversary of the attack on the Twin Towers in the city of New York took place a few days ago. We have lived through a bloody decade since the attack, in spite of the determined fight of the international community against terrorism.

I firmly believe in, and reaffirm, the need to strengthen international cooperation in order to prevent and fight terrorism. Every country must assume the obligation to address this universal scourge. That is why Spain joined, from the beginning, the initiative regarding the Global Counterterrorism Forum. The Forum was launched just a few days ago.

We firmly support United Nations initiatives within the framework of its Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, as well as the efforts of the Security Council and of the Secretariat to rationalize the existing structures in order to reach the goals that we have set in this area.

Spain is especially sensitive with regard to the victims of terrorism. Unfairly forgotten at times, they cannot be mentioned only as a rhetoric tool. Rather, there should be an effective commitment to give them recognition, remember them and provide them the assistance and support that they deserve. That is how

we have understood the position of victims in Spain, and we have passed legislation on the issue, giving us one of the most advanced and efficient models in the world in assisting the victims of terrorism.

Spain follows very closely the dynamism of a region with strong links with Spain — Latin America. The strength of the Latin American economy is essential to overcome the crisis and to create a new international economic governance.

That is why enhancing and consolidating a broad dialogue with Latin America is crucial. The dialogue should include the big issues on the global agenda, such as the design of an ambitious and innovative international financial architecture, as well as the response to climate change, energy, security and migration.

Latin America's regional integration has been an engine fuelling its growth and improving understanding. Spain has always wished to support this process in the framework of the Ibero-American Summits.

Other regions of the world also deserve special attention because of the tragic situations of their populations as a result of drought and other endemic problems.

The situation in the Horn of Africa is intolerable. We are contributing to alleviating the famine in Somalia, in coordination with other donors and United Nations agencies. However, humanitarian aid, despite being a priority, is only a first step towards development. We still have a long way to go in many parts of the world.

I therefore reaffirm Spain's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. The fight against poverty is a fundamental objective of my country's aid and cooperation for development policy. The challenge of the Millennium Development Goals should encourage us to redouble our efforts to achieve them within the deadline that has been set.

However, in order to realize the Goals and to provide a future for generations to come, we must make the most of meetings such as the one to be held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, where the intention is to forge a new paradigm that should allow us to combine the Millennium Development Goals with environmental sustainability.

It is also important to take advantage of the momentum created by the Cancún Conference in 2010 on the climate change negotiating process. We will continue to contribute to the process constructively, together with our European Union partners, at the upcoming Durban Conference.

The financial crisis affecting the global economy cannot be an excuse to avoid our commitments. On the contrary, it should encourage us to fulfil them. That is why Spain believes in supporting the development of innovative financing instruments — in other words, the development of mechanisms through which to mobilize mid-term and long-term additional financial resources. That should be done in a way that is stable and predictable, as well as being complementary to official development aid, which should be maintained, come what may. Spain currently chairs the leading Pilot Group on innovative financing for development, of which we have great hopes.

Spain's support for, and participation in, the activities of the Organization relating to the maintenance of peace and security in diverse parts of the world also demonstrates our commitment to the achievement of the purposes of the United Nations. Almost 1,200 Spaniards actively participate today in United Nations peacekeeping operations, with an especially prominent presence in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, a mission essential to maintaining stability in the south of the country, as well as to helping its economic development.

I thank the Secretary-General for participating in the inauguration of the United Nations base in Quart de Poblet, Valencia, thus recognizing Spain's commitment to the United Nations. The construction of the base, which Spain provided to the United Nations, will, as the Secretary-General said, facilitate the work of the Organization, enhance the reliability of its communications and considerably improve the safety and security of staff in the field.

Spain is very proud of its participation in United Nations operations. We intend to maintain a firm, active, permanent commitment to the Organization and its purposes. In line with that commitment, Spain announced in 2005 its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the biennium 2015-2016. We hope that, with the support of Member States, we shall have a seat on the Council and in that position continue working for the preservation of

international security and stability. At the same time, we will strive to promote development and human rights as fundamental pillars of lasting peace.

A year ago, Libyan, Egyptian and Tunisian men and women witnessed the Assembly meeting while they were still under the oppression of dictatorial regimes. Today they own their future. They have fought for it. The international community has protected and supported them. They, on their part, have given us hope. We can now hope that change is possible. There is no insurmountable challenge.

We are today certain that the international community, guided by the United Nations, is on the path of peace and freedom.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Henri Eyebe Ayissi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon.

**Mr. Eyebe Ayissi** (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): First, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic and Head of State of Cameroon, and on behalf of the delegation that I have the honour to lead at the current session, I warmly congratulate the President on his unanimous election to preside over the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session.

To Mr. Joseph Deiss, his predecessor, we wish to say how much his work as President of the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session was appreciated, just as Cameroon appreciated his visit to Yaoundé in January during his African visit.

We also once again sincerely congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon on the extension of his mandate as Secretary-General for a further five years. His determination and commitment to the United Nations during his first term of office contributed to the initiatives and important actions of the United Nations to promote peace and social and economic development throughout the world. He will have our best wishes and constant support during his second term, when we hope that he will successfully continue his work in every area within the framework of the United Nations agenda, particularly in terms of aligning and harmonizing the points of view of the various Member States.

This year a new Member, the Republic of South Sudan, joined the Organization. We had the opportunity to solemnly, but joyfully, welcome it on 14 July, following its declaration of independence a few days earlier. The arrival of this new State allows a dark chapter to be closed: decades of war, with a litany of woes, death, displaced persons, tears, human tragedy and suffering among the people of that land on our African continent.

Cameroon takes the opportunity to join in paying a well-deserved tribute to the leaders of the Sudan and of South Sudan, as well as to the United Nations and the African Union, for their tireless work in supporting the negotiations before the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2005, as well as during its subsequent implementation. The United Nations Mission in the Sudan and the recent creation of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan, whose task it is to support the new State in the process of consolidating its institutions and democracy, show the unique, decisive role played by the United Nations, fully in line with the fundamental purposes and principles of its founding Charter.

Cameroon welcomes the role that the United Nations has played in that regard. In more general terms, we believe that its role in conflict management should be played in a fully transparent way and in line with the principles, purposes and ideals of the Charter, which calls for the peaceful settlement of international disputes and for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

That is where the theme selected for this sixty-sixth session — "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes through peaceful means" — takes on its importance, reminding us that the Charter states that the Organization's primary purpose is

> "To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace".

The Charter also calls upon Members of the United Nations to

"refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."

International disputes, and a fortiori internal conflicts, should be settled peacefully in line with our Charter, through negotiation and mediation, rather than by recourse to force.

That is the position that the African Union, the continental organization of African States, ceaselessly advocates and defends. Cameroon agrees with the African Union that any lasting solution to an internal political crisis must take into account the State's national political institutions and the legitimate aspirations of the people concerned, but also the maintenance of the country's unity and territorial integrity. It considers that priority must be given to measures that guarantee the maintenance of peace, the promotion of national reconciliation and the consolidation of a democratic culture and ownership of the rule of law by Governments and citizens.

With regard to some current burning questions in this area, and particularly with regard to management of the Libyan issue, Cameroon noted the General Assembly decision on 19 September approving the mandate of the Libyan delegation established by the National Transitional Council, as well as the statement made here by the Chairperson of the African Union Council on 21 September, which was preceded by the 19 September press release. Fully in line with our external policy, Cameroon will respect the decision and statement in the context of its bilateral relations with the Libyan State, and within various international institutions.

It is the international community's duty to support States and their peoples in the management of their national affairs, and in seeking to ensure that they control their own fate. Governments, for their part, must seek to respond to the legitimate aspirations and the many and varied expectations of their peoples in all areas.

In Cameroon the Government is seeking to implement the reforms that began a few years ago to consolidate national political institutions and modernize our democracy. At the same time, it has established policies to create an environment favourable to development and revenue-generating activities and to improve the living conditions of its people, in a context of repeated international economic and financial crises, which have disturbing effects on the national programmes of States.

In economic terms, my country has had since 2009 a real moral compass for national players, both public and private, and for our external partners: the Growth and Employment Strategy document. The document is part of a comprehensive shared vision of development for Cameroon up to 2035, called Vision 2035. It emphasises seeking increased growth, job creation, poverty reduction and a tangible improvement in the living conditions of our people. The strategy will be implemented by, in particular, large-scale, labour-intensive building projects throughout the country, with particular emphasis on the energy sectors, mining and the creation of human capital.

In political terms, and with regard to elections, our independent electoral institution — Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) — set up in 2006 and made responsible for the entire electoral process, from the electoral register to the organization of the ballot, the oversight of elections and referendums, has become fully operational, and has a number of local offices.

Giving the right to vote to Cameroonians living abroad is part of the law that was promulgated this year. The electoral register has been updated by ELECAM, and incentives, such as free national identity cards, were given to encourage a large turn-out at the elections. Furthermore, legal provisions have been established to ensure the transparency, freedom, honesty and credibility of the elections in a context of consensual democracy.

In that regard, there is a deadline of importance to the Cameroonian people in the short term. On 9 October they will have the right to elect their leader and determine their future, as is the case in all democracies. I am referring to the presidential election. With all of the provisions that I have just mentioned, made with the technical assistance of United Nations specialized agencies, we believe that the conditions now exist to ensure that the election takes place peacefully. Independent national and foreign observers will be authorized to monitor the presidential election.

I wish to highlight with pride the political maturity demonstrated by the people of Cameroon. They have always been able to make the best choice in order to ensure that we preserve national achievements,

particularly with regard to peace and national unity, and the people have been able to work together in a spirit of patriotism, and with a high sense of a citizen's responsibilities when required to meet the various challenges, both external and internal, that they encounter and have encountered throughout their history.

I reiterate Cameroon's commitment to peace through mediation, as well as its commitment to democracy and good governance, both internally and internationally.

I close by emphasizing my country's commitment to the ideals of the Charter, and to those set out in the Constitutive Act of the African Union. My country wishes to see enhanced cooperation between those two international institutions, as they deal with issues affecting African countries, in line with the spirit and letter of those two international instruments.

This has been, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Cameroon, His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, Head of State and head of Cameroonian diplomacy, our contribution to the general debate at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which is our common international Organization with global competence.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Starčević** (Serbia): This morning the Assembly heard a statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, Mr. Sali Berisha. In what has become an annual ritual, he devoted a significant part of his statement to the problem of Kosovo, a statement which contained the expected misrepresentations and falsehoods. They are of such a nature that they simply must not remain unanswered. Let me attempt to deal with them as briefly and succinctly as possible.

Prime Minister Berisha stated that Kosovo "has shown assiduous commitment and seriousness in the process of negotiations in Brussels" (*A/66/PV.22*). It is equally true that Kosovo has shown assiduous commitment and seriousness by, in parallel, taking unilateral actions of a coercive nature, attempting to create a fait accompli on issues on which negotiations were still pending. By so doing, Kosovo creates tensions and conflicts, thus endangering the very process of negotiations to which it is supposedly committed. The truth is that Kosovo is not committed to that process at all. Aware that every process of negotiations involves give and take, Kosovo, emboldened by its mighty protectors, wants only to take. No sustainable solution has ever been possible on that basis.

Prime Minister Berisha misrepresented the July 2010 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, stating that it decided that "the declaration of independence of Kosovo" — supposedly from the Albanian version of the opinion — "is in full compliance with international law." (*ibid.*)

The Court never said that; it actually concluded that "the declaration of independence of 17 February 2008 did not violate general international law" (*A/64/881, para. 84*), but only because "the Court considers that general international law contains no applicable prohibition of declarations of independence."

That formulation does not convey the opinion of the Court that the unilateral secession of Kosovo is legitimate, or that Kosovo became, through it, an independent State. The Court made it very clear that it did not even consider whether the declaration was justified, or whether it produced any legal effects. Every international lawyer knows that in actuality the real question posed remained unanswered. And, by the way, it created a number of dissenting opinions in the Court.

Prime Minister Berisha spoke of "Ahtisaari's package". It is obviously a "package" only for Kosovo and Albania, since neither Serbia nor the Security Council ever accepted it. It therefore remains at the level of individual ideas on the Kosovo problem.

Furthermore, Prime Minister Berisha also stated that "Serbian cultural heritage in Kosovo is today more secured than ever." (*A/66/PV.22*). In evaluating that phrase, one should only remember the Albanian pogrom of Serbs in 2004, when over 30 Christian Orthodox churches were destroyed. The remaining churches continue to be routinely desecrated today.

Prime Minister Berisha asserted that "interethnic relations in all areas where Serbs and Albanians live together in the same communities are very good" (*ibid.*). One should only analyse the minuscule number of Serbs returning to their properties in Kosovo, and daily accounts of attacks on remaining Serbs and their property, to see that that is a rose-coloured image of a grim reality.

The Prime Minister of Albania spoke of "criminal groups and organized gangs that with weapons and other means are doing all in their hand to devastate the rule of law." (*ibid.*). I suppose that the Prime Minister was speaking of Albanian groups, which have a long tradition of trampling the rule of law in Kosovo and in a number of other countries of the world. Films have been made on that subject, and even here, in New York, dozens of members of the Albanian mafia were apprehended only a few months ago.

On the issue of the return of the remains of victims of the conflict in Kosovo, the Republic of Serbia has shown full readiness to do everything in its power to complete that task. It expects Kosovo to do the same.

It is really difficult to listen to, or read afterwards, the attempts of the Prime Minister of Albania to deny the most horrendous crimes committed anywhere in the region of former Yugoslavia during the period of conflict: abducting hundreds of younger Serbs, killing them and selling their organs on the black market.

It is easy to understand why the Prime Minister is doing it, because most of those crimes were committed in the territory of Albania. But implying that Carla del Ponte, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and Dick Marty and all the witnesses he spoke to are lying is simply too much. If he believes that he can wish those crimes away, we believe that he is wrong, and that the international community will insist on a full investigation and the prosecution of the perpetrators of the crimes, which are without parallel in modern humanity.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): I am compelled to exercise my right of reply after the comments made by the representative of Serbia in exercise of his right of reply. I profoundly disagree with what we heard.

It is a well known fact that Albania and Serbia disagree on the Kosovo issue, as was also witnessed during the general debate. Nevertheless, Albania, like many other Member States, and an ever-growing number of them, is convinced that the independent Kosovo is the only solution in a region torn apart by war, fuelled by ethnic hatred of the Serbia under Milošević rule. The independent Kosovo, as reality has proved, is, and will be, a key contribution to peace and stability in the region, and Albania continues to hope that Serbia will come to terms with this undeniable and irreversible reality.

Last year, the Assembly received with respect the International Court of Justice advisory opinion (see A/64/881) on the declaration of independence of Kosovo, an opinion that, we should remember, was requested by Serbia. We all know the Court's conclusion — although we heard a semantic effort that said the same thing — that the declaration of independence did not violate any provision of international law. As was stated many times before the ruling, Serbia is expected to accept and respect the Court's findings. We are still waiting for that to happen.

It needs to be emphasized that during the recent troubles caused by vandalism and primitivism in the north of Kosovo the open support offered by Belgrade to that unrest had a clear purpose. For months now, senior Serbian ministers and other high Government officials have rivalled each other in their declarations that the partition of Kosovo is the only solution. We need to remind the Assembly that whoever speaks of partition, of changing borders in the Balkans, is looking back to the darkest moments of recent Balkan history, which we think, and hope, will never return.

Like many other countries, Albania extends its full support to the Government of Kosovo to implement the rule of law, exercise its authority in close cooperation with the international presence there, and never yield to criminals, to the parallel structures and to individuals who care only for their own interest, and not the interests of the Serbian community they pretend to represent.

As German Chancellor Angela Merkel said a few weeks ago in Belgrade, Serbia must implement agreements with Kosovo, allow the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) to operate in the entire territory of Kosovo, and abolish the parallel structures in the north. We are waiting to see whether this message has been well understood in Belgrade.

The Serbian representative referred to a document known as the Dick Marty report. Let me be clear: the Albanian Government considers this report, and the heinous crimes it alleges, to be pure speculation, misleading assertions and unfounded conclusions that have no match with reality.

Albania is a democracy, a State of the rule of law and a society that has put respect for human rights and dignity at the foundations of its society. Albania, as a party most interested in the truth, has officially invited EULEX to investigate in full, and in a transparent and independent manner, all aspects of those allegations that involve any part of Albanian territory.

For that very reason, Albania voted for the resolution of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, as it believes that the ongoing investigation is the only way to cut short the loud propaganda, which we heard again this evening and which has been going on for too long.

The question is whether Serbia will be able to accept the findings of the EULEX investigation or will act in the way that it did with regard to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which, as I have said, Serbia itself asked for.

Albania and Serbia are two democracies, members of the south-east European community, which we believe is moving fast towards the future it deserves. We look forward to, and are working towards, a more integrated region at all levels.

As has been repeatedly stated, we are ready to develop bilateral relations with Serbia, in the very same way as we are developing them with all the other countries in the region. We have many common issues to develop in what we see as our common agenda, the most important one being European Union integration, which we think should be the main drive for our common future.

**Mr. Milanović** (Serbia): My delegation has said all that we deemed necessary in relation to the statement of the Prime Minister of Albania. It is up to the members of the Assembly to draw their own conclusions, since we see no need to prolong this exchange.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): I am really glad that we at least agree that we have no need to prolong this discussion.

*The meeting rose at 8.10 p.m.*